

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission Appoints New Executive Director
*Attorney, Law School Professor and Noted Expert in Police Misconduct to
Develop Procedures for Investigating Claims of Police Torture***

CHICAGO – February 4, 2011. The Chair of the Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission, retired Judge Patricia Brown Holmes, announces the appointment of David C. Thomas as Executive Director of the Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission.

The Commission was created to investigate claims of convicted persons that they were tortured into confessing to the crime for which they were convicted, and that their confessions were used to obtain their convictions, giving priority to claims alleging torture by Jon Burge or officers under his supervision.

Thomas brings a wide range of criminal law experience to his new position. He has represented clients for almost 40 years in both state and federal courts in the United States, and has also appeared before the United Nations' International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda located in Arusha, Tanzania, and at the Hague in the Netherlands. He was a member of the editorial board for the *Police Misconduct and Civil Rights Law Report* for over a decade.

Thomas also taught criminal procedure at Chicago-Kent College of Law for over 20 years, and was a Clinical Professor of Law. He has served as an expert witness in both state and federal courts regarding criminal law issues. "Professor Thomas is the perfect person to lead the charge of this commission," said Chair Holmes. "The members of our Commission are anxious for the 'bricks and mortar' to be set in place – the offices to be set up, furniture acquired, staff hired and rules promulgated by which the Commission will operate. Once that is completed, Executive Director Thomas will have an opportunity to showcase his experience and integrity to accomplish the goals and mandates of the Commission."

Thomas has been charged by the Commission to develop rules and procedures for evaluating the claims of torture as his first order of business. The Commission will hold an emergency meeting in late February or early March to begin the process of adopting the rules and procedures. The process is expected to take at least 90 to 120 days to complete, as required by law. Investigation into the claims may not take place until completion and adoption of the rules and procedures. "I am excited by the possibility of seeing justice served and am anxious to get to work on our mission. I have already been researching and giving thought to the necessary and proper rules by which we should operate and hope to get public comment and approval pursuant to law within the statutory time so that our Commission may begin hearing cases sometime this summer," said Executive Director Thomas. "I realize it is an ambitious timeline, but I

plan to do my best to get us in motion as quickly as possible so that we may begin addressing the concerns of those who were tortured into confessing to crimes for which they were convicted as a result of torture.”

Inquiries about the Torture Commission and claims of torture should be addressed to: Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission, c/o Executive Director David Thomas, 160 N. LaSalle, Room 507, Chicago, IL 60601.

For more information about the Commission, including the minutes from its meetings and its schedule of meetings open to the public, please visit our webpage, located on the Illinois Human Rights Commission’s website at www.state.il.us/ihrc, click on “Meetings” and scroll down to the Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission section.